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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a parent counseling program for the parents of upcoming senior students. The purpose of the program is to incorporate parental guidance and interest into the planning process of a student's post high school objectives. The parent counseling lasts three weeks and consists primarily of a series of interviews between counselor and parents, centering around the needs, abilities, and aspirations of the student; the available career choices and the likelihood of success in terms of the student's potential. The program has been in effect since 1968, and the data seem to indicate that students whose parents had been involved in the program had better chances of completing a post high school education and were more satisfied with their past educational majors and present occupational choice than were those students whose parents had not been so involved. (NG)

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Parent Counseling - - A Guidance Function

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A student's post high school planning process is very important. Parents want to be involved. When parents are given this opportunity their child's post high school achievements are significantly increased.

During the past seven years, the Guidance Department of the Waverly-Shell Rock Senior High School, Waverly, Iowa, has conducted a parent counseling program for the parents of forthcoming senior students. This is a continuing program for all senior classes and is usually conducted immediately following the end of the school year.

The purpose of the program is to incorporate parental guidance and interest into the planning process of a student's post high school objectives. Our program emphasizes this parental involvement. It is known that parents exert a major influence on the behavior of their children, therefore, counselors need to investigate all reasonable methods of helping seniors prepare for the future. From past experience, I have found that parents have not often been included in the detailed post high school planning which takes place between the student and school personnel. Many parents have unanswered questions regarding their child's abilities, interests, and the post high school opportunities available to them. I believe that parents want to cooperate and can lend valuable support to their child and to the school in the development of these plans. The summer counseling program offers parents the chance to become involved in the decision making. Professor John Gilmore, Boston University, has done considerable research on parent counseling and he has this to say, "Parent counseling is a unique form of counseling focused on parents rather than the child, which enables the parents to develop a family milieu in which the productivity of their child will be enhanced."[1]

Near the end of the school year, the counselors make direct contact with all parents of next year's seniors by means of a letter explaining the program and its purpose. Two weeks before the end of the school year, another letter of invitation is sent out, enclosing an appointment card to be filled out by the parents. After the parents have read the letter, they return the appointment card indicating their desire to engage in a meeting with the counselor. The appointment card is stamped and self-addressed to facilitate replies. After receiving the cards, the counselors then call each parent to confirm a time and day for the meeting. All visits are arranged at the convenience of the counselor and parents, utilizing day or evening sessions.

Prior to each appointment, the counselor thoroughly reviews the student's school record. They familiarize themselves with the information contained in the student's cumulative record which includes the details of subjects completed and the grades received for them. It is important to be aware of the student's numerous test scores in order to interpret these scores to the parents. If the student is involved in extracurricular school activities, this also is noted. The counselor reviews the student's health record in case there is a physical handicap to be discussed. A review of tardies and absences is also made. Notes made of any questions to be asked of the parents when they arrive for the counseling session. This review of a student's record is the key to a successful visit.

The next step is the parent counseling visit itself. This session can be divided into seven categories. First, the cumulative folder is offered to the parents for their inspection. From this file the child's interests, abilities, aptitudes, and total past achievements can be reviewed. Test scores, subjects completed, and grades received are observed and discussed. From this review, an idea of the child's general nature takes shape. Second, student performance, aptitudes, abilities and individual interests are outlined and discussed. Third, the counselor discusses with the parents, the child's hobbies, disabilities, emotional make-up, personality characteristics and any unusual family circumstances. This helps the counselor to better understand the student. Fourth, the counselor summarizes all the foregoing information and relates it to areas of post high school education and occupational choices. This is a very important step because the student's characteristics are related to occupational examples and then to schools of further education. Fifth, the counselor informs the parents of financial

costs involved and sources of financial aid available for further education. Sixth, when necessary the counselor acts as a referral source to acquaint parents with outside services. Seventh, the counselor makes a written summary of each parent-counseling interview. These notes are valuable because they will be reviewed in the Fall prior to follow-up visits with each senior. These notes will reinforce the counselor's memory as to what was said during the parent counseling interview.

The parent counseling program lasts approximately three weeks. This entails four to five parental visitations per day, five days a week. The sessions last from 30 to 45 minutes each. About two-thirds of each day is spent in actual parent counseling and one-third is used for preparation and evaluation. All counseling sessions are held in the guidance suite, however, in unique cases the sessions can be held in the parent's home.

I believe the parent counseling program serves a useful function within the high school guidance framework. The following background and research will attempt to verify that including parents in the development of the student's post high school planning is an important guidance function.

The first two years of the parent counseling program were Federally funded. The Iowa Department of Public Instruction Guidance Services accepted the initial proposal in the Spring of 1968 and the program began in June of 1968. The pilot project was confined to the senior classes of 1969 and 1970 but has remained a continuing service since that time.

A follow-up study of these two senior classes was completed in the Spring of 1975. The classes of 1969 and 1970 totaled 381 students. Two hundred eighty-two (282) or 74 percent responded to the follow-up questionnaire. The study is very significant because of this large response. The study measured the accomplishments of the graduates five and six years after completing high school.

The data collected from these former graduates indicated less than ten percent error in the dependency between parent counseled students and their post high school achievements on a chi square measurement. These achievements for the students whose parents were counseled are: probability of graduating from college or a vocational technical program; students fairly sure of their occupational choice while in college or a technical program; students reasonably satisfied with their present occupational choice; students less inclined to change college majors; and, students who indicated they received help from their parents with their occupational choice. In other words, the parent counseled students had a ninety percent chance of completing a post high school education and were reasonably satisfied with their past educational majors and present occupational choice. The high school students whose parents elected not to be involved in the parent counseling program indicated a twenty to sixty percent probability of error when compared to the same achievements as the parent counseled. Therefore, their chance of completing a post high educational program or feeling reasonably satisfied with their present occupational choice was not as great as the parent counseled group.

Attached are ten probability tables which indicate strong support for the parent counseling process. Tables I and III appear to be ambiguous. There is an indication that the parent counseled technical degree student did not receive significant help from parents with their occupational choice. However, in Table III, the parent counseled technical degree student was reasonably satisfied with their present occupational choice. My opinion is that technical students are more job oriented. Many of these students were on-the-job training students and knew what they wanted to do. Parent counseling reinforced their goal to graduate from technical school.

Tables II, V and VI indicate considerable support for parent counseling and the college student. The process appears to help students select a pre-planned major, receive a college degree and be satisfied with their present occupational choice.

It is difficult to explain Table IV and why its probability of error is higher. It is my opinion that college students are more idealistic in their ambitions and therefore may never be completely satisfied with their present occupation.

Table VII makes a comparison between two variables rather than three as in previous tables. Without the third variable, the data is more significant. The figures indicate a strong relationship between students reasonably satisfied with their present occupation and parents who were involved with the counseling process.

Table VIII is noteworthy because it is obvious that parent counseling assists students in making a definitive choice of their college major. Consequently, these students would be able to spend more time in their major, possibly saving some time and money when attending college, and probably feel more confident with their college major.

The last set of Tables, IX and X, indicate strong support for parent counseling and students completing a post high school educational program. The parent counseled and non-parent counseled students were near equal in terms of their class rank. This indicates a strong agreement between parents and their children's objectives when parent counseling is involved.

The implications of the parent counseling process are diverse. As school counselors, we are charged with meeting the needs of students. Parent counseling reinforces the student's plans which helps them become more successful and satisfied people. It relates to the development of the individual through continuing education and/or the selection of an occupation which is satisfying. Finally, the process heightens the helping relationship between parents and their children. I feel parent counseling is significant and should be incorporated into guidance services.

Gilmore, John, "Parent Counseling and the Productive Personality," Journal of Education, Vol. 154, No. 1, Oct. 1971, 5-37.

Student Questionnaire - Class of 1969 and 1970

Directions: Make only one response for every question answered.

I. What were you doing the fall of - - - - - - - 1972 1973 Presently
(mark one response for each column)

attending vocational technical school	____	____	____
attending a community college	____	____	____
attending a four year college	____	____	____
working at full time salaried job	____	____	____
working as a homemaker	____	____	____
unemployed	____	____	____

II. If you attended college, did you complete a four year college program and receive a degree? yes_____ no_____

III. If you attended a technical school, did you complete a technical program and receive a degree, certificate, or a diploma? yes_____ no_____

IV. If you attended a technical program how did you feel about occupational choice?
sure_____ very sure_____ undecided_____

V. If you attended college, did you have a pre-planned major in mind?
yes_____ no_____ partly_____

VI. If you attended college, how many times did you officially change majors?
once_____ twice_____ three_____ four or more_____

VII Did the high school counselor help you with your occupational choice?
partly_____ yes_____ no_____
If yes or partly to the above question - did you choose one of the occupations which were discussed? yes_____ no_____

VIII. Did your parents help you with your occupational choice?
yes_____ no_____ partly_____

IX. Are you reasonably satisfied with your present occupational choice?
yes_____ no_____

X. Was the high school curriculum helpful to you in making an occupational choice?
partly_____ yes_____ no_____

XI. If yes to the above question, were you taking classes in one of the senior occupational programs (D.E., I.V.E., Ag., H.Ec., or Office Clerical?)
yes_____ no_____

XII. Any additional comments you would care to enclose would be appreciated. Thank you for your time. Please return to: Guidance Department
Waverly-Shell Rock High School
Waverly, Iowa 50677

Comments:

Note: A yellow questionnaire sheet was used for parent counseled students and a white sheet was used for non-parent counseled students.

Table I

		Parent Counseled				Non Parent Counseled				
		Parents helped with occupational choice				Parents helped with occupational choice				
		yes	no	partly		yes	no	partly	
Students attending a technical school and receiving a degree, diploma, certificate	yes	14	19	11	44	6	11	7	24
	no	19	38	29	86	17	66	20	103
		33	57	40	130	23	77	27	127
		chi square with two degrees of freedom significance 0.4044				chi square with two degrees of freedom significance 0.2574				

Table II

		Parent Counseled				Non Parent Counseled				
		Parents helped with occupational choice				Parents helped with occupational choice				
		yes	no	partly		yes	no	partly	
Students attending college and receiving a degree	yes	10	22	22	54	3	16	6	25
	no	27	42	21	90	20	61	22	103
		37	64	43	144	23	77	28	128
		chi square with two degrees of freedom significance 0.0664				chi square with two degrees of freedom significance 0.6851				

Table III

		Parent Counseled				Non Parent Counseled		
		Are you reasonably satisfied with your present occupational choice?						
		yes	no			yes	no	
Students attending a technical school and receiving a degree, diploma, certificate	yes	42	1	43	yes	21	3	24
	no	74	13	87	no	94	10	104
		116	14	130		115	13	128
		chi square with one degree of freedom significance 0.0597				chi square with one degree of freedom significance 0.9626		

Table IV

		Parent Counseled				Non Parent Counseled		
		Are you reasonably satisfied with your present occupational choice?						
		yes	no			yes	no	
Students attending college and receiving a degree	yes	51	4	55	yes	20	4	24
	no	77	11	88	no	96	9	105
		128	15	143		116	13	129
		chi square with one degree of freedom significance 0.4765				chi square with one degree of freedom significance 0.4164		

Table V

		Parent Counseled: Parents helped with occupational choice				Non Parent Counseled: Parents helped with occupational choice			
		yes	no	partly		yes	no	partly	
Students who attended college with a pre-planned major	yes	14	18	17	49	4	12	8	24
	no	0	8	0	8	1	7	0	8
	partly	4	7	12	23	2	7	2	11
		18	33	29	80	7	26	10	43
		chi square with four degrees of freedom significance 0.0047				chi square with four degrees of freedom significance 0.3370			

Table VI

		Parent Counseled: Are you reasonably satisfied with your present occupational choice?			Non Parent Counseled: Are you reasonably satisfied with your present occupational choice?		
		yes	no		yes	no	
Students who attended college with a pre-planned major	yes	41	6	47	21	2	23
	no	3	4	7	6	2	8
	partly	22	1	23	8	2	10
		66	11	77	35	6	41
		chi square with two degrees of freedom significance 0.0020			chi square with two degrees of freedom significance 0.4566		

Table VII

		Parents were involved in counseling		
		no	yes	
Are you reasonably satisfied with your present occupational choice?	yes	41	93	134
	no	7	5	12
		48	98	146

chi square with one degree of freedom significance 0.1013

Table VIII

Students who attended college and officially changed majors.

		Parent Counseled						Non Parent Counseled					
		0	1	2	3	4+		0	1	2	3	4+	
Students attending college and receiving a degree	yes	23	23	6	2	0	54	8	10	4	0	1	23
	no	8	6	10	0	2	26	7	6	3	1	0	17
		31	29	16	2	2	80	15	16	7	1	1	40

chi square with four degrees of freedom significance 0.0068

chi square with four degrees of freedom significance 0.6694

Table IX

Students attending college and receiving a degree

	yes	no	
Parents who did not receive counseling	25	109	134
Parents who received counseling	55	93	148
	80	202	282

chi square with one degree of freedom significance 0.0009

Table X

Students attending a technical school and receiving a degree, diploma, certificate

	yes	no	
Parents who did not receive counseling	24	109	133
Parents who received counseling	44	90	134
	68	199	267

chi square with one degree of freedom significance 0.0085